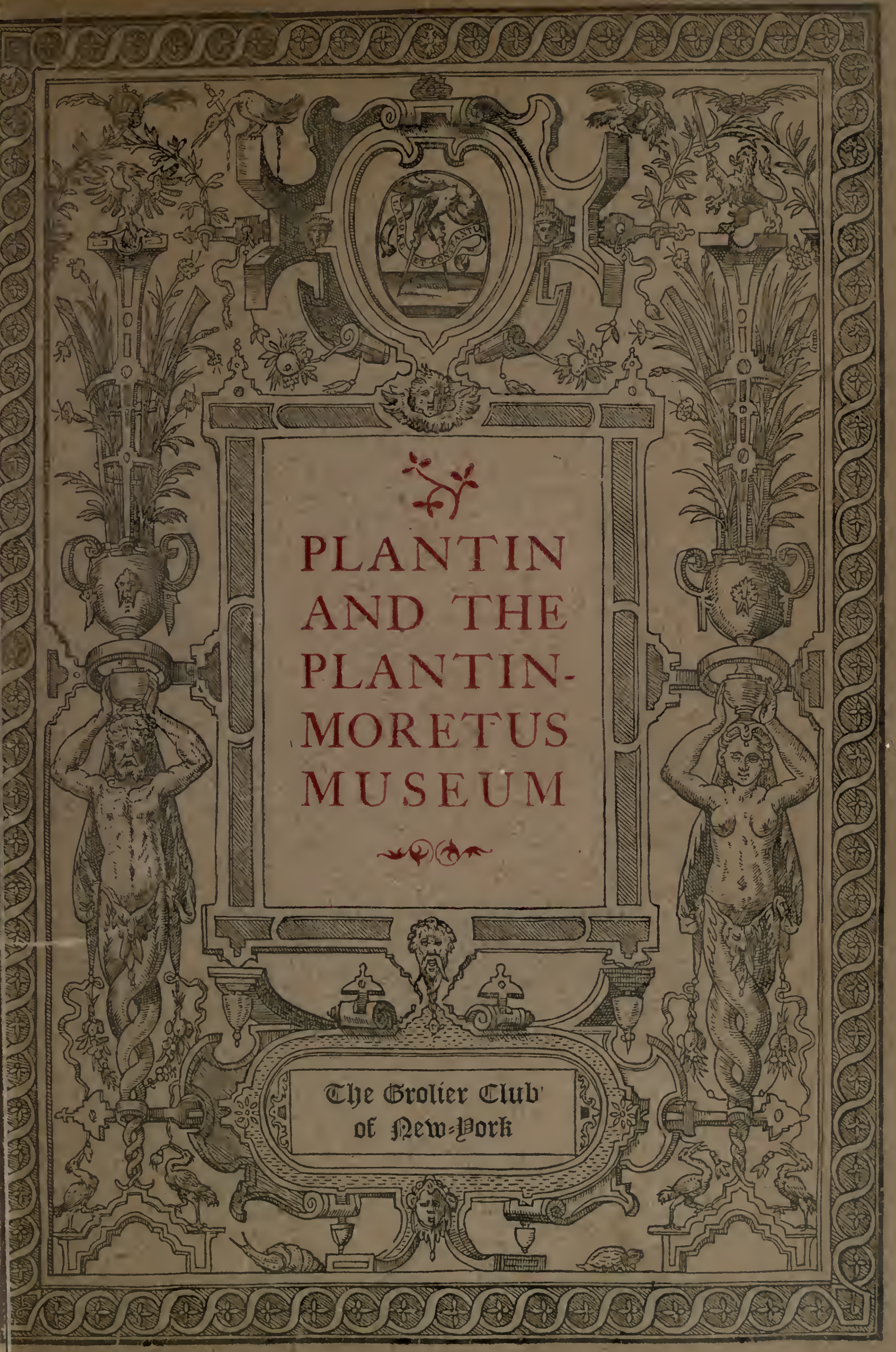
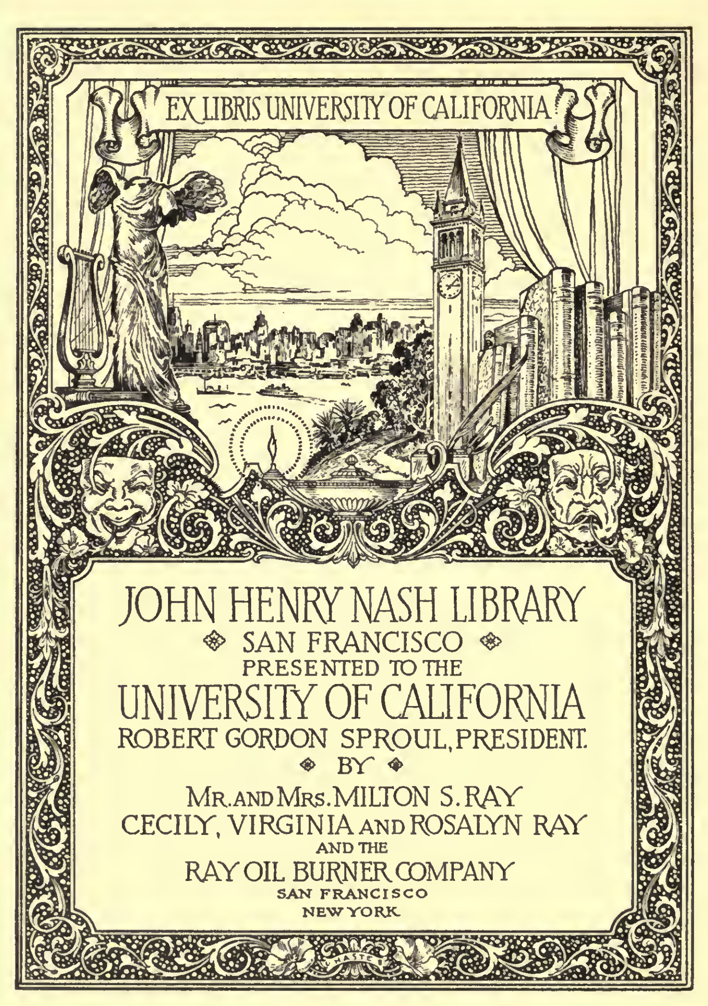

PLANTIN
AND THE
PLANTIN-
MORETUS
MUSEUM
The Grolier Club
of New-York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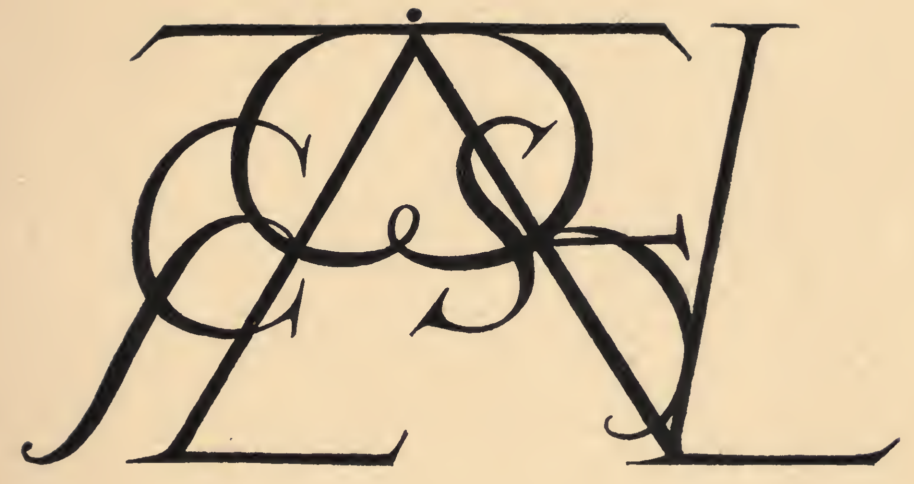

CHRISTOPHER PLANTIN

AND

THE PLANTIN-MORETUS MUSEUM

AT ANTWERP

BY

THEO. L. DE VINNE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOSEPH PENNELL, AND OTHERS

PRINTED FOR THE GROLIER CLUB
NEW-YORK
1888

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CHRISTOPHER PLANTIN.

(Reproduced from an Engraving by Henri Goltzius.)

CHRISTOPHER PLANTIN AND THE PLANTIN-MORETUS MUSEUM

THE modern printing-office is not at all picturesque. Whether it be old, with grimy hand-presses and dingy types, or new, with huge iron machines and long lanes of cases and stones, it does not invite the artistic pencil. Without doubt the cradle of books, but can one see any poetry about the cradle? The eye is confused with strange sights; the ear is jarred with harsh noise; the air itself is heavy with odors of ink and oil and wet paper. Nor does the imagination expand in the office of the manager, in which the prominent objects are

always chairs and desks, and a litter of ragged papers and well-thumbed books—all prosaic and factory-like.

Was it always so? No one knows of the interior of Gutenberg's office in the *Zum Jungen*

Gutenberg's Office at Mayence.

house at Mayence, for no artist in his day or ours has found in it any beauty to be preserved; but we do know that this birthplace of a great art is now a beer-shop, in which for a few pfennigs one may get a refreshment for the body not to be had for the mind. The fate that fell on Gutenberg's office has fallen on the offices of Aldus and the Stephens and the Elze-

The Front of the Museum.

virs. Not a vestige of office fittings or working material remains.

The Plantin-Moretus Museum at Antwerp is the only printing-house that has been left intact as the monument of a great departed business. How well it was worth having may be inferred from the price of twelve hundred thousand francs paid for it by the city, in 1876, to the last member of the family of the founder. How well it is worth seeing is proved by the steady tide of visitors that pass through it every day. Here is a printing-house that is not a factory—a house that has been as much the home of art and education as a place for work and trade.

It is not an imposing structure. No public building in Antwerp is more unpretentious as to its exterior. Its dull front on the Marché du Vendredi gives but one indication of the treasures behind the walls. To him who can read it, the little tablet over the door is enough to tell the story; for it is the device of Christopher Plantin, "first printer to the king, and the king of printers." Here is the hand emerging from the clouds, holding a pair of compasses, one leg at rest and one describing a circle; here is the encircling legend of *Labore et Constantia*. Heraldry is overfull of devices that are as arro-

gant as they are absurd, but no one dare say that Plantin did not fairly earn the right to use the motto of labor and patience.

II

PLANTIN deserved remembrance from Antwerp. He did much for its honor, although he was not of Flemish birth. Born in France, about 1514, taught printing and book-binding at Caen, he should have been by right, and would have been by choice, a worthy successor to the printers of Paris who did admirable work during the first half of the sixteenth century. But his most Christian Majesty Henry II. of France had begun his reign in 1547 with the announcement that he should punish heresy as worse than treason. What a drag-net was this word heresy for the entanglement of printers! Stephen Dolet, most promising of all, had been recently burned at the stake; Robert Stephens, weary of endless quarrels with meddlesome ecclesiastics, was meditating the flight

Phototypie Jos Maes, Anvers

A Trade-Mark.

he soon afterward made to Geneva. To those who could read the signs of the times, there were even then forewarnings of the coming massacre of St. Bartholomew. France was a good country for a printer to leave, and Plantin did wisely to forsake Paris in 1548 and to make his home in Antwerp.

Not so large as Paris or London, Antwerp was superior in wealth and commerce, as well as in its artistic development. Printing was under restraint here, as it was everywhere; but the restraints were endurable, and printers were reasonably prosperous. Antwerp encouraged immigration. One of the most interesting of the many paintings in its Hôtel de Ville is that of the ceremonious naturalization of an Italian and his family in the sixteenth century. It was as the principal in a similar ceremony that Plantin became a citizen in 1550, and was enrolled as a printer.

With little money and few friends, Plantin had to struggle to keep his foot-hold in a city that had already been well served by many master printers. It did not appear that he was needed at all as a printer. So Plantin must have thought, for he avoided printing, and opened a shop in which he sold prints and

books, and his wife sold haberdashery. To fill up unemployed time he bound books and decorated jewel-boxes. At this work he prospered, and soon earned a reputation as the most skillful decorator in the city. Before he was fairly established he met a great misfortune. Encountered on a dark night by a ruffian who mistook him for another, Plantin was dangerously stabbed, and forever disabled from handling gilding-tools. The possible rivalry that might have arisen between him and the artistic book-binders of Paris was effectually prevented. He had to begin anew, but it was more as a publisher than as a printer, for it is not certain that in 1555 he owned a printing-office. In that year he published two little books, cautiously dividing the risk with other publishers. It must have been difficult to get books that were salable, for his first book* was in Italian and French, his second in Spanish, his third in French—clear evidences all that there were in Antwerp already printers before him who had published all the books called for in Flemish.

* "*La Institvtione di vna Fancivlla nata nobilmente.*" It was a small 12mo (now rated an 18mo). It would have greatly cheered him if he could have known that three hundred years after his death a copy of this book would be sold for more than one hundred dollars. He had to be content with one sou and a quarter.

Painting in Hôtel de Ville—Italian Family taking the Oath of Allegiance.
(Last Painting by Henri Leys.)

But Plantin went to Antwerp to stay. In 1556 he published four more books, two of them original; in 1557 eight books, six of them original; in 1558 fourteen books, many of them of large size and of marked merit. The four years that followed show steady increase in the number and improvement in the quality of his publications, among which were several Latin classics, a Greek text, a Latin Bible, and a dictionary in four languages.

His ability was fully recognized in 1562, but his business life was henceforward a succession of great misfortunes as well as of great achievements. By leaving Paris he did not escape, he only postponed, the conflict that had begun between the press, the State, and the Church. The country that promised to give him liberty was to become the chosen battle-field of the contestants, and the result of the battle was to be undecided even at his death. In 1562 the regent, Margaret of Parma, ordered search for the unknown printer of a heretical prayer-book, and it was proved that the book had been printed in Plantin's printing-office. Forewarned of coming danger, Plantin escaped to Paris, where he staid for twenty months. When he could safely return, his business had

been destroyed, and his printing-office, and even his household property, had been sold at auction to satisfy the demands of his creditors. Thirteen years of labor had been lost. He was down, but not to stay.

Plantin was strongly suspected of complicity in this matter of heretical printing, but he had not been condemned. He overcame the prejudices, if there had been any, of ecclesiastical authorities, and made them active friends forever, although he was frequently afterward denounced as a Calvinist. Four wealthy men lent him money to found a printing-house, in which he worked hard. At the end of the next four years he had seven presses and forty workmen in his employ, and had published 209 books. What to him was of more consequence, he had established friendly relations with the authorities of the State. The city of Antwerp gave him special privileges as printer; the King of Spain in 1570 made him "Prototypographe," the ruler of all the printers in the city. He was in correspondence with many of the great scholars and artists of his time, and was by them, as well as by every one, regarded as the foremost printer of the world. The King of France invited him to Paris; the Duke of

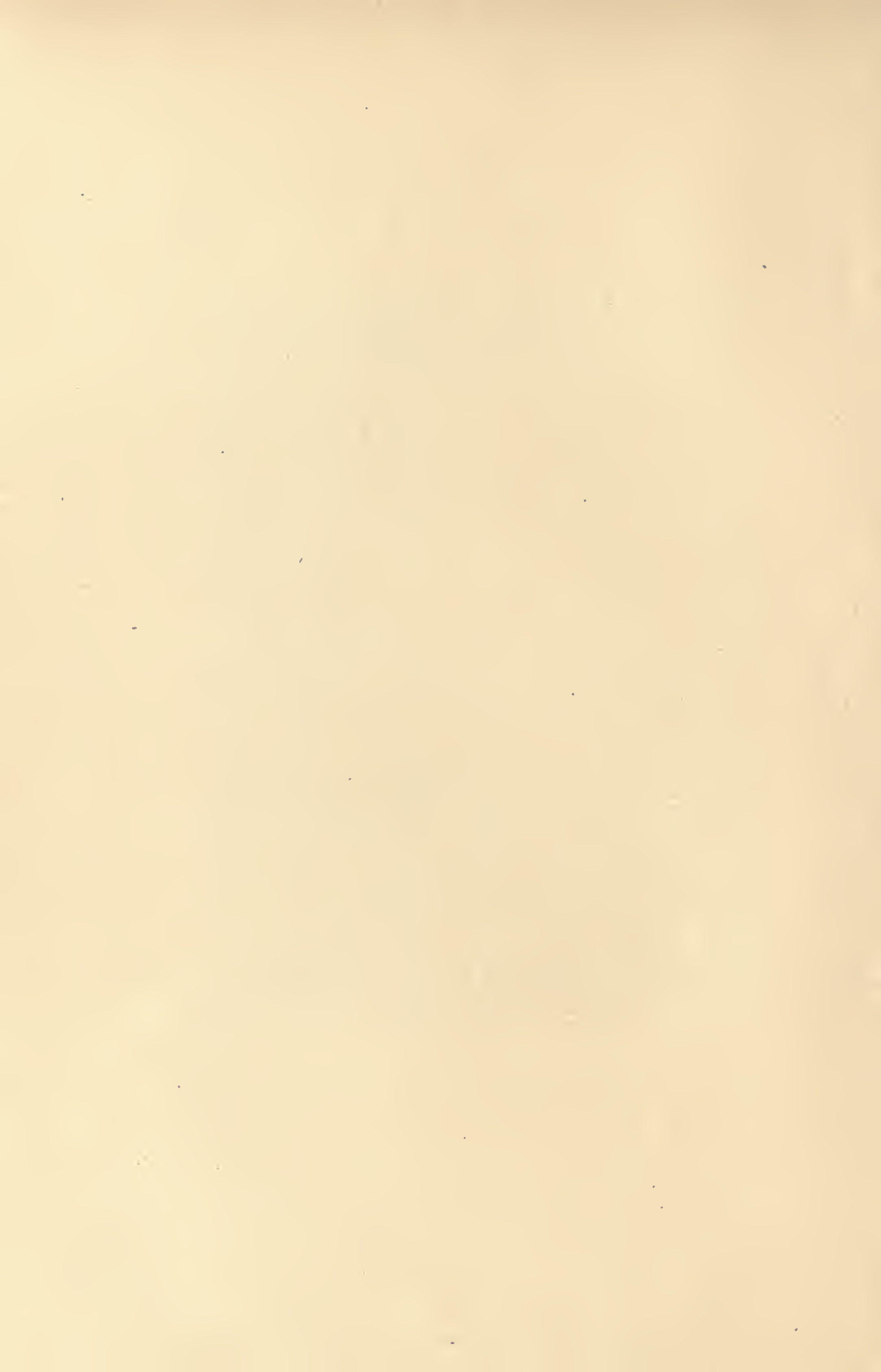
Savoy offered to give to him a great printing-house and special rewards if he would go to Turin. But he kept in Antwerp, and enlarged his business. He not only worked himself, but made all his household help him. His daughters kept a book-store in the cloisters of the cathedral; he established an agency in Paris under the direction of his son-in-law, Gilles Beys. Another son-in-law, Moretus, was his chief clerk, and a regular attendant at all the German book fairs, while another, Raphelengius, was his ablest corrector of the press. Even the younger daughters were required to learn to read writing, and to serve as copy-holders, often on books in foreign languages, before they were twelve years old.

His season of greatest apparent prosperity began in 1570. His printing-house was soon after one of the wonders of the literary world. Twenty-two presses were kept at work, and two hundred crowns in gold were required every day for the payment of his workmen, recites an old chronicler with awe and astonishment. His four houses were too small. He had to buy and occupy the larger property which now constitutes the Plantin-Moretus Museum. Before he occupied his new office

he had printed the largest and most expensive book then known to the world, the "Royal Polyglot," eight volumes folio, in four languages, with full-page illustrations from copper-plates. It was an enterprise that earned him more of honor than of profit, for the King of Spain, who had promised liberal help, disappointed him. Plantin had incurred enormous expenses and was harassed by creditors, and had to sell or pledge his books at losing prices. At that time the patronage of the king was a hindrance, for when he was in the greatest straits the king commanded him to print new service books for the Church that would be of great cost and of doubtful profit.

The king's habitual neglect to pay his obligations provoked his soldiers to outrages which nearly ruined Plantin. Antwerp had been for years in practical mutiny against the king. To repress this mutiny the citadel was filled with Spanish soldiers who were furious because they had not been paid, and were threatening to plunder the city by way of reprisal or as compensation. On the fourth day of November, 1576, when Plantin was no more than fairly settled in his new office, the threat was executed.

Jean Moretus I, son-in-law of Plantin.
(From a Painting by Rubens.)



Joined by an army beyond the walls, and by treacherous allies that the civic authorities had hired as defenders, they began the sack of the city. Eight thousand citizens were killed, a thousand houses were burned, six million florins' worth of property were burned, and as much more was stolen, amid most atrocious cruelties. The prosperity of the great city, which had been the pride of Europe, received a blow from which it never recovered. The business of Plantin was crushed. "Nine times," he said, "did I have to pay ransom to save my property from destruction; it would have been cheaper to have abandoned it." But his despondency was but for a day. In the ruins of the sacked city, surrounded by savage soldiers, discouraged with a faithless king who would not protect his property nor pay his debts, ill at ease with creditors who feared to trust him, and alarmed at the absence of buyers who dared not come to the city, Plantin still kept at work. The remainder of his life was practically an unceasing struggle with debt, but debt did not make him abandon his great plans. To pay his debts he often had to sell his books at too small prices. Sometimes he had to sell his working-tools. In 1581 he went to Paris to dispose of

his library, costing 16,000 francs, for less than half its value.

Rich enough in books, in tools, in promises to pay, he had little of money, and slender credit. The political outlook was disheartening. Alexander of Parma was menacing Flanders and Brabant; there was reason to fear a siege of Antwerp and the destruction of his printing-house. With the consent of his creditors Plantin temporarily transferred his office to his sons-in-law, and in 1582 went to Leyden, to muse as he went on the warning, "Put not your trust in princes." There he was cordially received by the university, and at once appointed their printer. There he founded a new printing-house, in which he remained for nearly three years. When the siege was over, Plantin returned to Antwerp, but it was never after the Antwerp of his earlier days. Nor was Plantin himself as active. The king had made Antwerp a Catholic city, but its commerce was destroyed.

Plantin died on the first day of July, 1589, and was buried in the cathedral. Although, by reason of his bold undertakings, he had been financially embarrassed for many years before his death, he left a good estate, at least on

Bust of Balthazar Moretus, in the Court-yard.

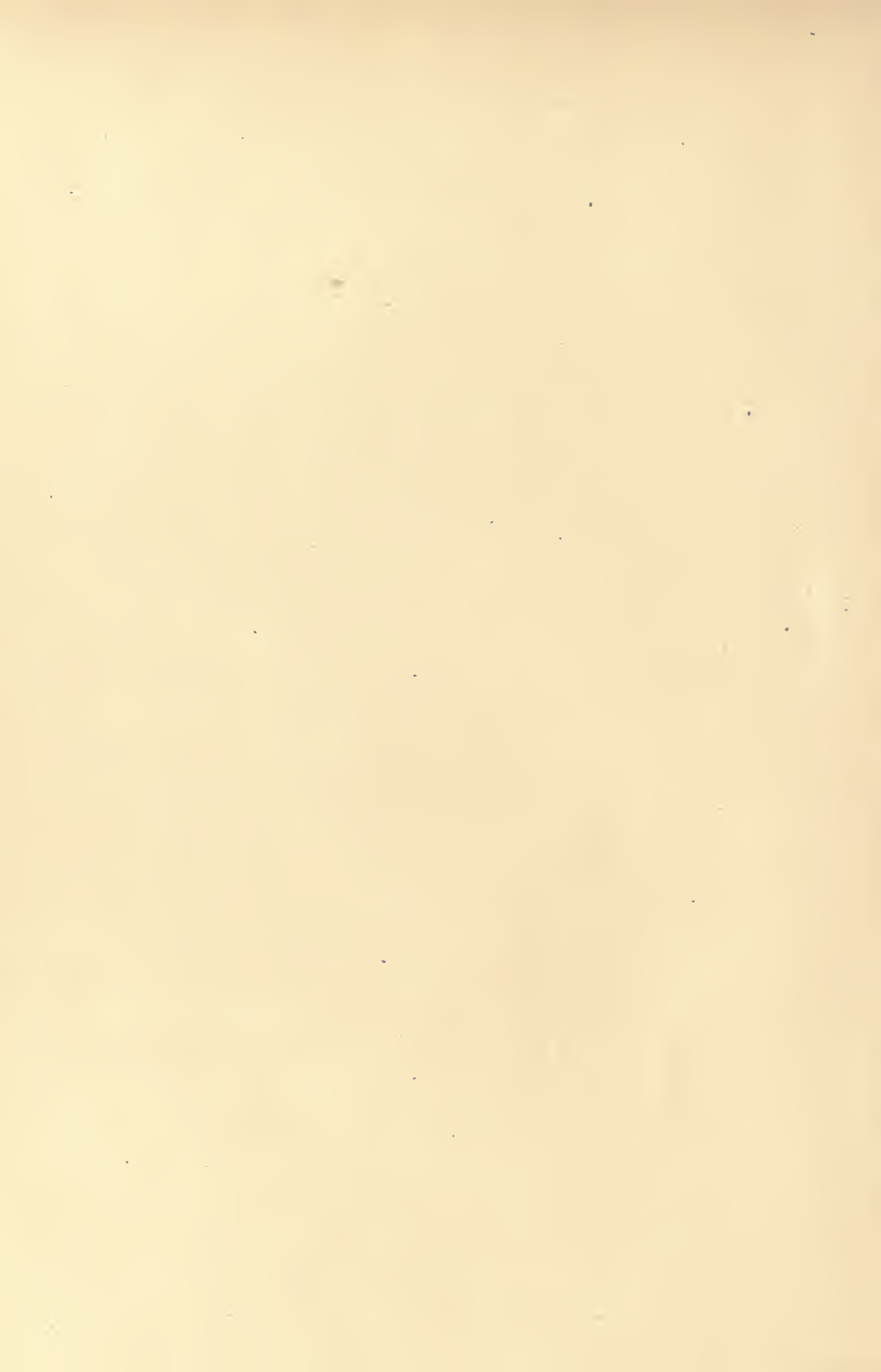
paper. By a will made conjointly with his wife, who soon followed him, he gave the management of his printing-office and most of his property, then valued at 135,718 florins (equal to $217,000), to his son-in-law Moretus and his wife, burdened with legacies to children and other heirs, with the injunction that they, at their death, should bequeath the undivided printing-office to the son or successor who could most wisely manage it. If they had no competent son, then they must select a competent successor out of the family. This injunction was fairly obeyed. Under John Moretus the reputation of the house was fully maintained, although the publications were not so many nor so meritorious. But this falling off was largely due to the diminished importance of Antwerp as a commercial city. His sons Balthazar and John Moretus II. carried the office to the highest degree of prosperity. To Balthazar I., more than to any other member of the family, the world is indebted for the treasures of art and learning which now grace the rooms of the Plantin-Moretus Museum. A very large share of the prosperity of the house came from the valuable patents and privileges accorded to Plantin and his successors by the King of

Spain. For more than two hundred years they were the exclusive makers of the liturgical books used in Spain and its dependencies. The decline of the house began with the death of Balthazar III. in 1696. During the eighteenth century it lost its preëminence as the first printing-house in the world, and was simply a manufactory of religious books. In 1808 the special privileges they had for making these books for Spain and its possessions were withdrawn, and this great business of the house was at an end. In 1867 it ceased to do any business.

III

BERNARD has told us, in his "Archéologie Typographique," of the desolation of the house as he saw it in 1850. Everything was in decay. That the types and matrices would soon go to the melting-kettle; that books and prints, furniture and pictures, would find their way, bit by bit, to bric-à-brac shops; that this old glory of Antwerp would soon be a story of the past — seemed inevitable. Fortunately there were in Antwerp men who tried to save the

FRANCISCVS RAPHE-
LENGIVS



collection. Messrs. Emanuel Rosseels and Max Rooses (now *conservateur* of the Museum), under the zealous direction of M. Leopold de Wael, the burgomaster of the city, induced the city and the State to buy the property, the transfer of which was formally made, as we read from a tablet in the wall, in 1875.

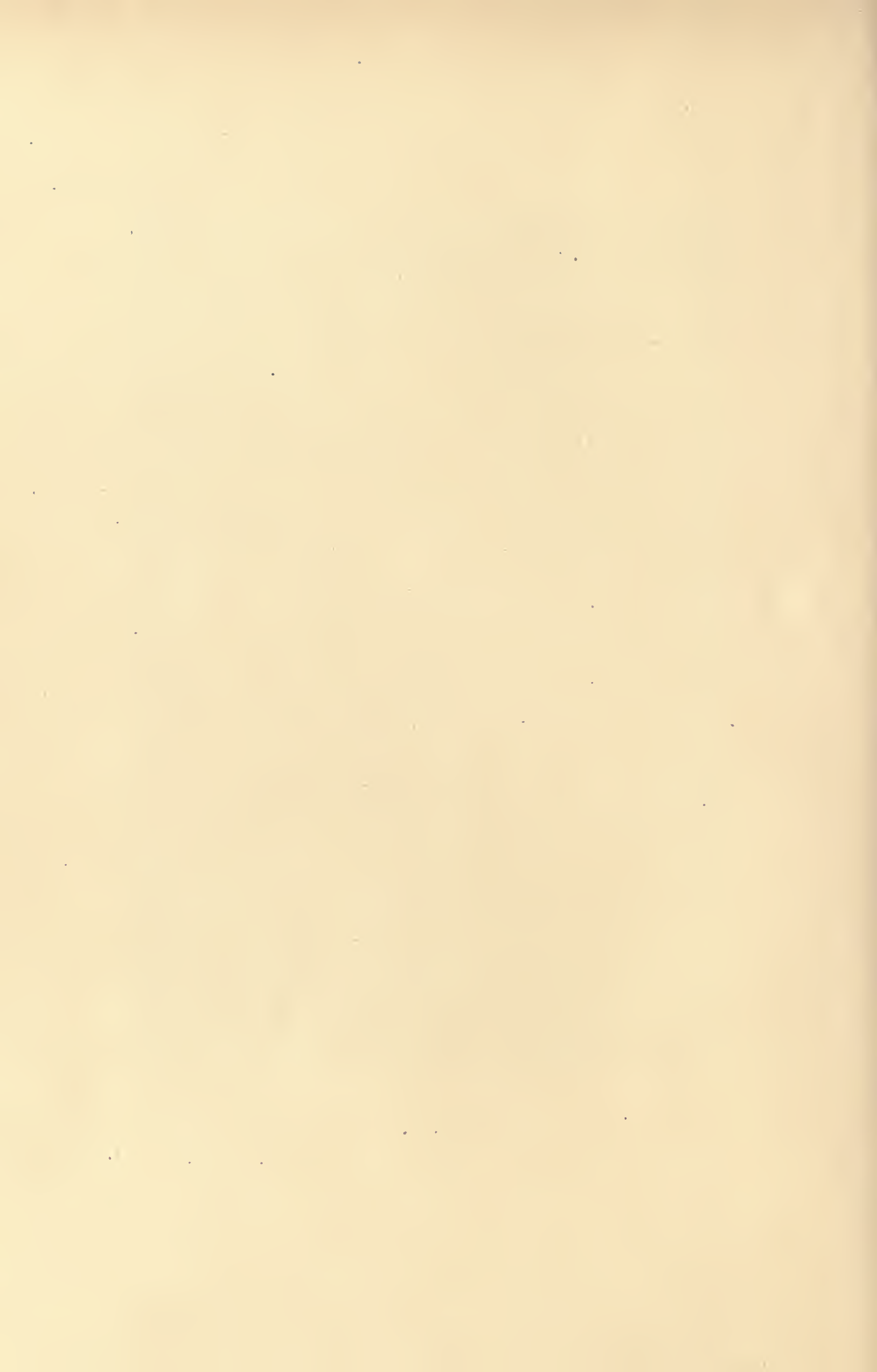
The Museum, as it now stands, is not as Plantin left it. His successors, Balthazar I. especially, made many changes, additions, and restorations, but all have been done with propriety. The visitor is not shocked by incongruities of structure or decoration. The difficult task of re-arranging the house has been done with excellent taste by the architect Pierre Dens. It is the great charm of the Museum that the house and its contents, the books, pictures, prints, windows, walls, types, presses, furniture, are all in their places, and with proper surroundings. They fit. To pass the doorway is to take leave of the nineteenth century; to put ourselves not only within the walls, but to surround ourselves with the same familiar objects which artists and men of letters saw and handled two or three centuries ago. Here are their chairs and tables, their books and candlesticks, and other accessories

of every-day office and domestic life. It is a new atmosphere. Standing in the vestibule under a copper lamp, facing a statue of Apollo, surrounded by sculptured emblems of art and science, the visitor at once perceives that he is in something more than a printing-house — in an old school of literature.

Yet there is little that is bookish in the first salon. One's attention is first caught by the little octagonal window lights that face the inner court, bright in colors, and with commemorations of John Moretus II. and Balthazar Moretus II. and their wives. And then one has to note the heavy beams overhead, and the old tapestries on the walls, the great tortoise-shell table, and the buffet of oak with its queer pottery, and the still queerer painting of an old street parade in Antwerp.

Over the chimney-piece in the second salon is the portrait of Christopher Plantin as he appeared at sixty-four years of age, wrapped in a loose black robe, with a broad ruff about his neck — unmistakably a man of authority, and of severity too. There is nothing dull, or impassive, or Dutch, about this head. He is a Frenchman of the old school,—muscular, courageous, enduring,—a man of the type of Condé

Balthazar Moretus I.
(After a painting in black and white by Erasmus Quellyn.)



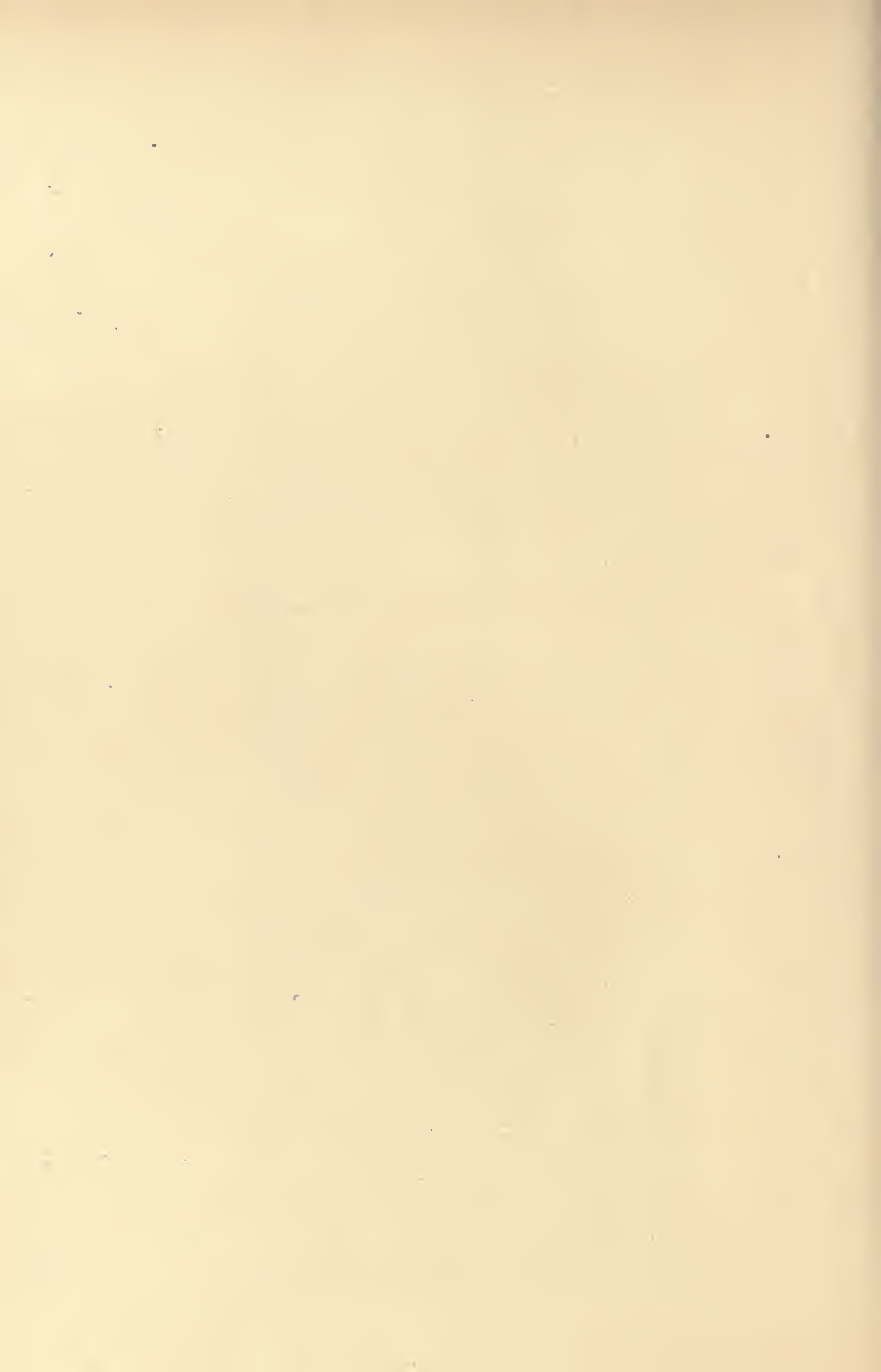
or Coligny. Here too is Jeanne Rivière, his wife. How Flemish-looking is this Frenchwoman of placid face, in her white cap and quilled collar! plainly one of the grand old women that Rembrandt loved to honor. The portraits of some of Plantin's five daughters are on the walls, but they can be seen together only at the cathedral, on a panel painted by Van den Broeck. The eldest, Marguerite, was married in 1565, to Francis Raphelengius.* Martine, the second daughter, in 1570 married John Moretus, who was Plantin's trusted man of business during his life, and his heir and successor. Madelaine, the fourth daughter, brightest of all, in 1572 married Egidius Beys,

* The wedding festivities lasted one week, for which Plantin made this provision, which has a fine medieval flavor: three sucking pigs at 17 sous each, six capons at 22 sous, twelve pigeons at 6 sous, twelve quails at 4 sous, five legs of mutton at 1 florin, twelve sweet-breads at 7½ sous the dozen, three beef tongues at 8 sous, four almond cakes, six calves' heads, three legs of mutton browned, six (16-lb.) hams at 2¾ sous the pound, Rhine wine valued at 12 florins 5 sous, red wine valued at 4 florins 2½ sous, red and black cherries, strawberries, oranges, capers, olives, apples, salads, and radishes valued at 3 florins 8½ sous, confectionery valued at 4 florins 9 sous, two pounds of sugar-plums, one pound of anis, and three pounds of Milan cheese. The gifts to Raphelengius amounted to 32 florins 5 sous; to Plantin (for this was the custom of the period), 90 florins 16½ sous. Plantin gave to his workmen on this occasion a pot of wine valued at 7 florins.

who was Plantin's agent in Paris. "My first son-in-law," wrote Plantin, "cares for nothing but books; my second knows nothing but business." Not a kindly criticism of Moretus, who was learned and wrote well in four languages; but Plantin must have been well content with these sons-in-law who complemented each other and fully served him. Beys* was not an esteemed assistant, nor was his son.

* In 1587 the eldest son of Beys, then fourteen years of age, lived with his grandfather. At the close of a day of alleged misconduct, Plantin required of him the task to compose and write in Latin a description of the manner in which he had spent that day. This is the translation: "The occupations of Christophe Beys, February 21, 1587. I got up at half-past 6 o'clock. I went to embrace my grandfather and grandmother. Then I took breakfast. Before 7 o'clock I went to my class, and well recited my lesson in syntax. At 8 o'clock I heard mass. At half-past 8 I had learned my lesson in Cicero and I fairly recited it. At 11 o'clock I returned to the house and studied my lesson in phraseology. After dinner I went back to the class and properly recited my lesson. At half-past 2 I had fairly recited my lesson in Cicero. At 4 o'clock I went to hear a sermon. Before 6 o'clock I returned to the house, and I read a proof [held copy for] *Libellus Sodalitatis* with my cousin Francis [Raphelengius]. I showed myself refractory while reading the proofs of the book. Before supper, my grandfather having made me go to him, to repeat what I had heard preached, I did not wish to go nor to repeat; and even when others desired me to ask pardon of grandfather, I was unwilling to answer. Finally, I have showed myself in the eyes of all, proud, stubborn, and willful. After supper I have written my occupations for this day, and I have read them to my grandfather. The end crowns the work."

Jeanne Rivière and her Daughters. John the Baptist at the top.
(From a Painting in the Cathedral by Van den Broeck.)



Here too are the portraits of many of the learned friends of Plantin. The somber face of Arias Montanus, the learned confessor of Philip II., who was commissioned by the king to superintend the printing of the great polyglot, glows with all the color that Rubens could give. By the same painter are the portraits of Ortelius and Justus Lipsius and Pantinus—grave, scholarly, dignified faces all. Of greater attraction is the portrait, so often copied, of Gevartius, the clerk of the city of Antwerp. A show-case in the middle of the room contains designs by Martin de Vos, Van den Broeck, Van der Borcht, Van Noort, Van der Horst, Rubens, Quellyn, and other illustrators of books for the Plantin office, all famous in their time. Not the least curious is Rubens' bill of sale, dated 1630, to Balthazar Moretus I., of 328 copies of the works of Hubert Goltzius, the great archæologist, for 4920 florins, and the further sum of 1000 florins for the plates of the same, payable in books. The opportunity for "working off unsold remainders" was not neglected.

Fronting on a side street is the old bookstore, with all its furniture, including the old

scales by which light gold coin was tested. A motley collection of books is on the shelves — prayer-books and classic texts, amatory poems and polemical theology. Posted up is a "Catalogue of Prohibited Books," a placard printed by Plantin himself in 1569, by the order of the Duke of Alva. Two of the prohibited books, the "Colloquies of Erasmus" and the "Psalms of Clement Marot," came from the Plantin press. What keen perception must have been exercised to find heresy in the Psalms! This was not the only interference with the printer by the law, for there is also posted a tariff made by the magistrates of Antwerp, by which a fixed price is made for every popular book. Whoever dares sell a book at a higher price is warned that he shall be fined twenty-five florins. In the corner near the window is the chair in which the shop-boy sat and announced incoming customers to the daughters who were at work in the rear of the store, from which it was separated by a glazed partition. Plainly a room for work and trade, but how differently work and trade were done then! No doubt there was enough of drudgery, but to the young women who worked in the glow of the

Room of Justus Lipsius.

colored glass windows, and listened to the ticking of the tall Flemish clock, and saw above them on the wall the beautiful face of a statuette of the Madonna, life could not have had the grimy, stony face it presents to the modern shop-girl.

In an adjoining room is the salon of tapestries, five of which represent shepherds, hunters, market women, dancers,—Flemish idyls all. One has to make another comparison, between the value of old and modern needlework, not to the credit of Berlin wools and South Kensington stitches. Curious furniture is in the room—a buffet on which rests fine old china, wardrobes in oak and ebony, chairs and tables of wonderful carving, all surmounted by a chandelier of crystal. Most interesting of all is an old harpsichord with three tiers of keys, on the interior of which is painted a copy of Rubens' St. Cecilia. It bears the inscription, "Johannes Josephus Coenen, priest and organist of the cathedral, made me, Roermond, 1735." Not at all an old piece,—just midway between Plantin's time and ours,—but how old it seems by the side of a modern piano!

IV

Of severer simplicity is the room of the Correctors of the Press, in which is a great oak table that overlaps the two diamond-paned windows opening on the inner court. On the walls are paintings of two of the most famous of Plantin's correctors — Theodore Poelman and Cornelius Kilianus. Poelman is represented as a scholar at work on his books in a small, mean room, in which his wife is spinning thread and a fuller is at work. And this was Poelman's lot in life: to work as a fuller by day, and to correct and prepare for press classic texts at night, for three or four florins per volume. Kilianus was corrector for the Plantin house for fifty years. Beginning as a compositor in 1558, at the very modest salary of five patards a day, not more (perhaps less) than two dollars and forty cents a week in our currency, he ultimately became Plantin's most trusted general proof-reader. Not so learned as Raphelengius, he was more efficient in supervising the regular work of the house. He wrote good Latin verse, composed prefaces and made translations for many books, and com-

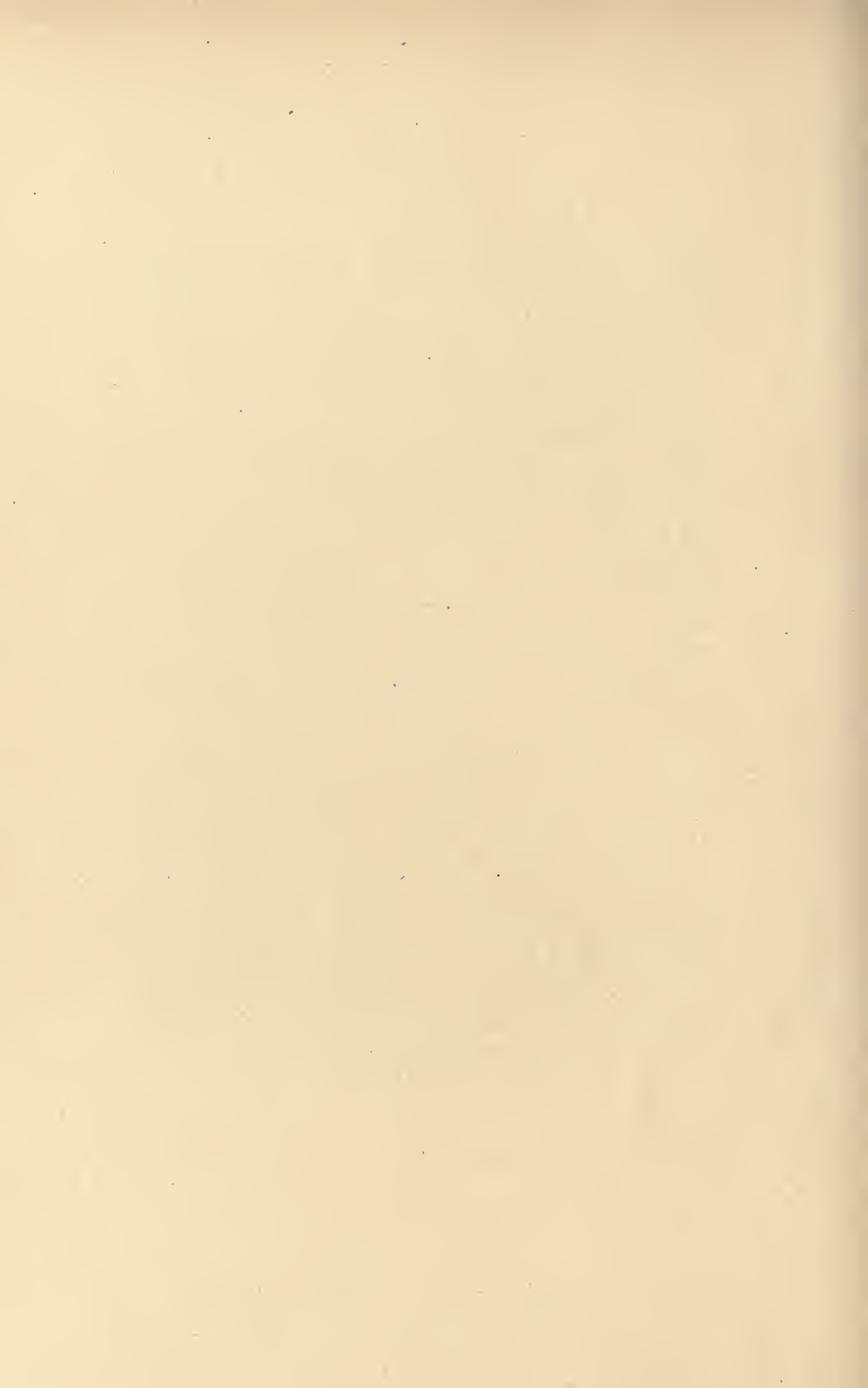
The Conference Chamber.

piled a Flemish dictionary of which Plantin seems to have been ungenerously envious. His greatest salary was but four florins a week, but little more than was then paid to Plantin's expert compositors. The most learned of Plantin's regular correctors was his son-in-law Raphelengius, who had been a teacher of Greek at Cambridge. He began his work in the Plantin office at forty florins a year and his board. Montanus testified that he had thorough knowledge of many languages, and was an invaluable assistant on the Polyglot Bible. His greatest salary, in 1581, was but four hundred florins a year. As a rule editing and proof-reading were done at the minimum of cost. The wages paid to a scholarly reader, who had entire knowledge of three or four languages, was about twelve florins a month. Ghisbrecht, one of these correctors, agreed to prepare copy for and to oversee the work of six compositors for his board and sixty florins a year. Besides the regular correctors of the house, Plantin had occasionally some volunteer or unpaid correctors, like Montanus. His friend Justus Lipsius seems to have been the only editor who was fairly paid for literary work.

The printing-room does not give a just idea of its old importance. What here remains is as it was in 1576, but the space then occupied for printing must have been very much larger. Plantin's inventory, taken after his death, showed that he had in Antwerp seventy-three fonts of type, weighing 38,121 pounds. Now seven hand-presses and their tables occupy two sides of the room, and rows of type-cases and stands fill the remnant of space. How petty these presses seem! How small the impression surface, how rude all the appliances! Yet from these presses came the great "Royal Polyglot," the Roman Missal, still bright with solid black and glowing red inks, and thousands of volumes, written by great scholars, many of them enriched with designs by old Flemish masters. "The man is greater than the machine," and Plantin was master over his presses. From these uncouth unions of wood and stone, pinned together with bits of iron, he made his pressmen extort workmanship which has been the admiration of the world.

Plantin had this work done at small cost. His account-books show that the average yearly earnings of expert compositors were one hun-

Plantin's Proof-readers at Work.
(From a Painting by Pierre Van der Oudera, now in possession of Felix Grisar, Antwerp.)

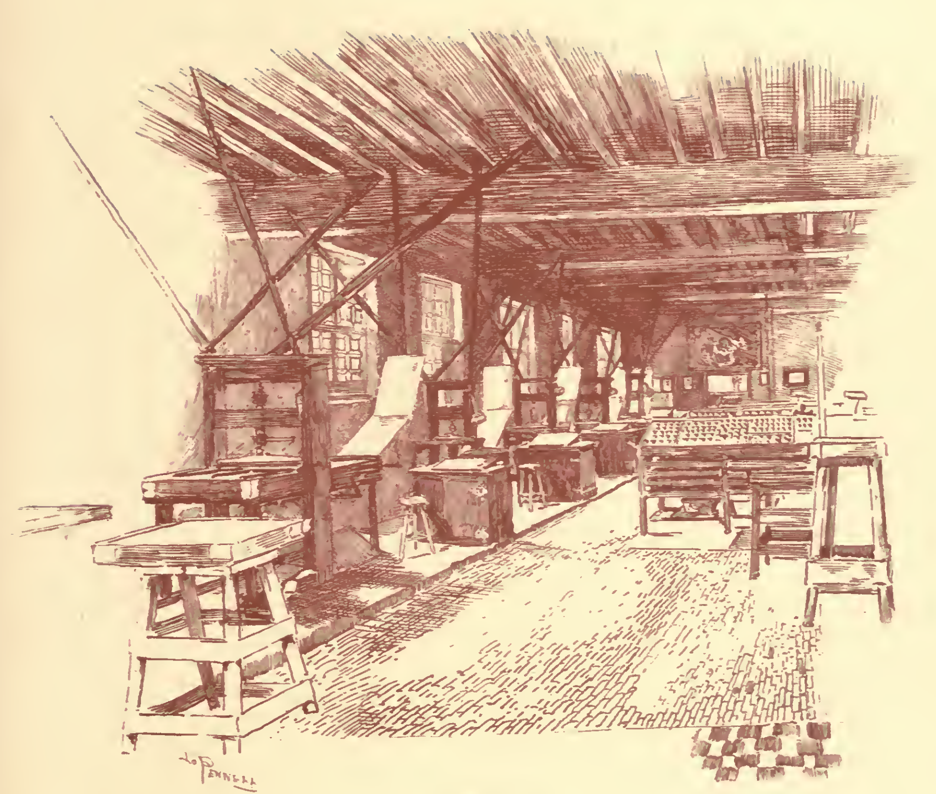


dred and forty-two florins, and of the pressmen one hundred and five florins. The eight-hour law was unknown. Work began at 5 o'clock in the morning, but no time is stated for its ending. His rules were hard. One of them was that the compositor who set three words or six letters not in the copy should be fined. Another was the prohibition of all discussions on religion. Every workman must pay for his entrance a *bienvenue* of eight sous as drink money, and give two sous to the poor-box. At the end of the month he must give thirty sous to the poor-box and ten sous to his comrades. This *bienvenue* was as much an English as a Flemish custom, as one may see in Franklin's autobiography.

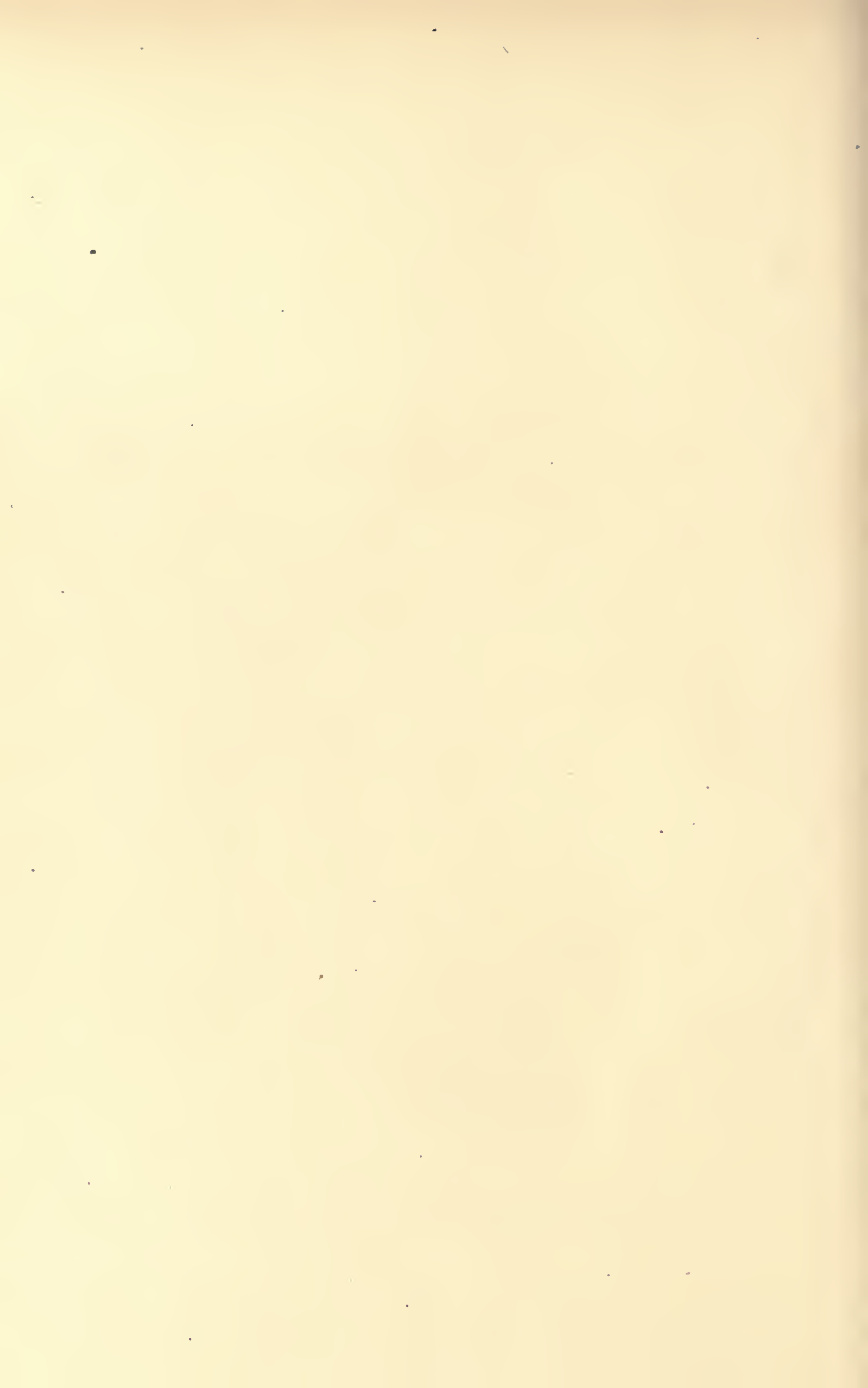
The presses cost about fifty florins each. In one of his account-books is the record that he paid forty-five florins for copper platens to six of his presses. This is an unexpected discovery. It shows that Plantin knew the value of a hard impression surface, and made use of it three centuries before the printer of *The Century* tried, as he thought for the first time, the experiment of iron and brass impression surfaces for inelastic impression.

The proportion of readers or correctors to compositors was large. In 1575 Plantin had, besides Raphelengius and Moretus, five correctors for twenty-four compositors, thirty-nine pressmen, and four apprentices. Much of the work done by these correctors was really editing, translating, re-writing, and preparing copy. With all these correctors, proof-reading proper was not too well done. Ruelens notes in Plantin's best work, the "Royal Polyglot," one hundred and fifteen errors of paging in the eight folio volumes. Yet this book was supervised by Montanus and Raphelengius, and in some portions by eminent scholars and professors of the Leyden University.

To enable him to publish this polyglot with parallel texts in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Chaldee, Plantin got Granvelle and other ecclesiastics to recommend it to the king and get from him a subvention. Plantin's first estimate for the six volumes which he then thought enough for the work was 24,000 florins, exclusive of the cost of new types and binding. After much deliberation the king consented to advance 6000 ducats, for which he was to receive an equal value in books at



The Press-room.



trade rates. But the work grew on Plantin's hands; it made eight volumes instead of six, and it cost 100,000 crowns before it was completed. Twelve hundred copies on paper were printed and announced to the trade in the style of the modern Parisian publisher.

10 on grand imperial paper of Italy.... price not stated
30 on grand imperial, at the price of........ 200 florins
200 on the fine royal paper of Lyons.......... 100 florins
960 on the fine royal paper of Troyes.......... 70 florins

The king had twelve copies on vellum, which required more skins than could be had in Antwerp or Holland. It is of interest to note that Plantin, like all printers, had no enthusiasm for vellum. To an application from a German prince who asked for a copy on vellum, Plantin answered that none could be furnished, but that the copies on the imperial Italian paper were really better printed than those on the vellum. In the matter of clean, clear printing they were every way better.

This "Royal Polyglot" was the beginning of Plantin's financial troubles, from which he never fairly recovered. The king would not allow the work to be published until it had

been approved by the pope, who refused his consent. Montanus went to Rome to plead for a change of decision; but it was not until 1573, when a new pope was in the chair, that this permit was granted. Even then the difficulties were not over. A Spanish theologian denounced the work as heretical, Judaistic, the product of the enemies of the Church. Then the Inquisition made a slow examination, and grudgingly decided in 1580 that it might be lawfully sold. For more than seven years the unhappy book was under a cloud of doubt as to its orthodoxy. The damage to Plantin was severe. Before he reached the concluding volumes his means were exhausted, and he had to mortgage at insufficient prices two-thirds of the copies done. The king was fully repaid in books for all money he had advanced, but Plantin got no more. With the generosity of people who are accustomed to give what does not belong to them, the king granted Plantin an annual pension of four hundred florins, secured on a confiscated Dutch estate; but the perverse Dutchman who owned the estate soon retook it, and as the king could not wrest it from him, the pension was forever ineffective.

The Proof-readers' Room.

V

SEVEN rooms or lobbies in the Museum are devoted to the exhibition of engravings as well as of their blocks or plates, of which there are more than 2000 on copper and about 15,000 on wood. It is a most curious collection of original work, more complete and more diversified than that of any printing-house before the nineteenth century. Indeed, it would not be easy to find a rival as to quantity and quality among modern houses. Here are etchings by Rubens, Van Dyck, Jordaens, Teniers; engravings by Bolswert, Vorsterman, Pontius, Edelinck. One looks with more than ordinary attention on the *St. Catharine*, the only etching known to have been done by the hand of Rubens, as well as on the wonderful line engraving by Edelinck of the portrait of *Philippe de Champagne.* The prints that may be most admired were made to the order of Plantin's successors, who were contemporaries of the greatest Flemish masters, but their preference for the work of true artists was implanted by the founder of the house. "I never neglected," Plantin said, "when I had the opportunity and

the ability, to pay for the work of the best engravers." The sparsity of engravings in his earlier books was, no doubt, caused by his poverty; but even these petty books show that they were planned by a man of superior taste, by a printer whose heart was in his trade, and who loved his work for the work's sake. His early training as a book-finisher gave him decorative inclinations. What he could not do on book covers with gilding-tools he tried to have done on the printed leaves with wood-cuts from designs by eminent artists.

He must have quickly earned good reputation as a skillful printer of wood-cuts, for he was chosen by the authorities of Antwerp over all rivals to print a large illustrated book describing the recent obsequies of Charles V. This book he published in 1559 in the form of an oblong folio, containing thirty-three large plates, at the cost of 2000 florins. These plates, although separately printed, were designed to be conjoined, and used as a processional frieze. In planning this book he did not repeat the folly of many of his rivals, who were still imitating the coarse designs and rude cutting of the obsolete "Biblia Pauperum" and "Speculum Salutis." He gave the work to a compe-

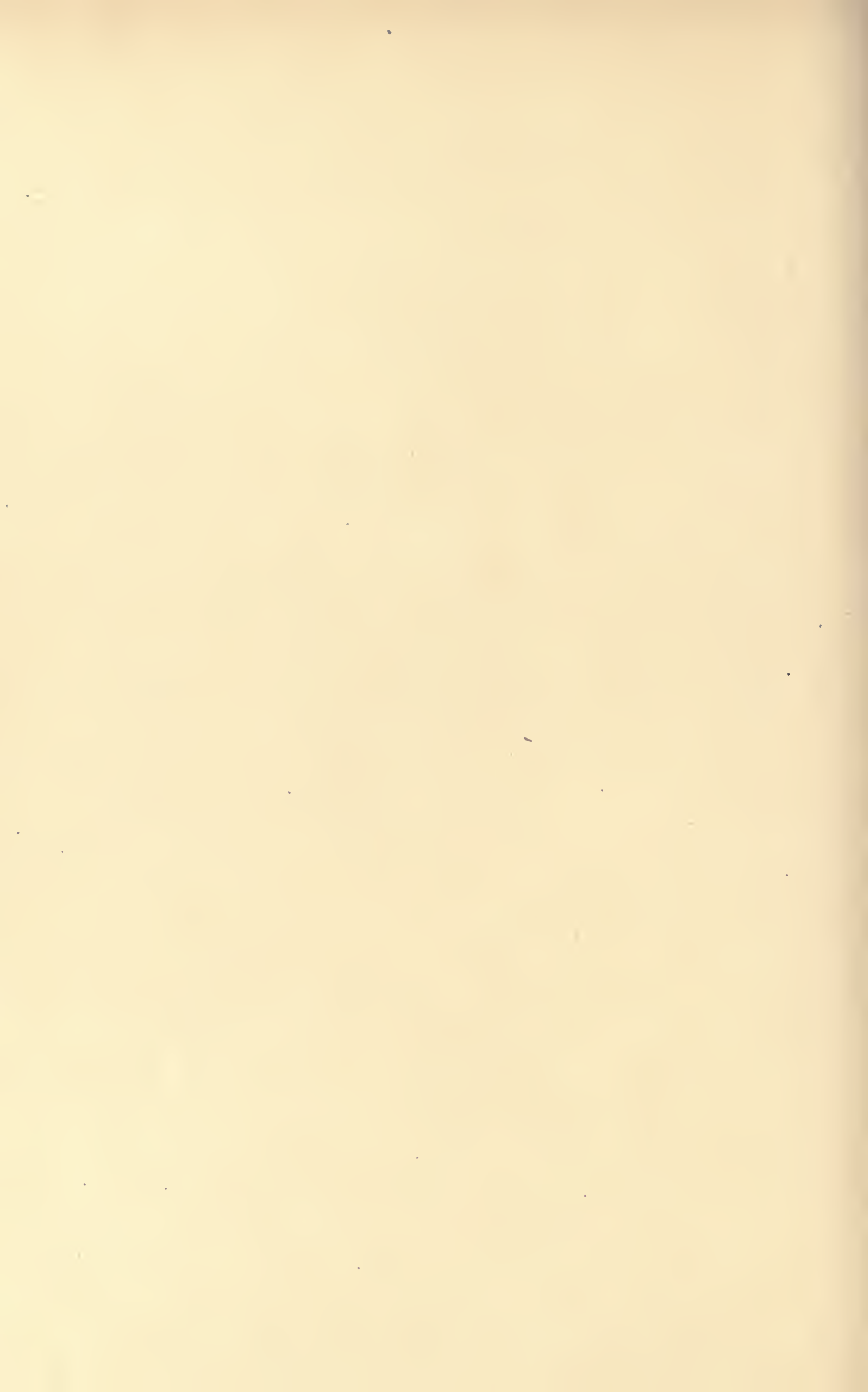
The Entrance to the Engraving-room—in Black and Gold.

tent designer, and was equally careful with the engraving and printing, and found his profit in the large sale of many editions and in five languages. After this he made increasing use of engravings on wood. No printer of his time illustrated books so freely: in one book, the "Botany" of Dodoens, the cuts would be regarded now as profusely extravagant. To this day they are models of good line drawing and clean engraving. When the text did not call for descriptive illustrations he made free use of large initial letters, head-bands, and tail-pieces. The shelves and closets of the Museum contain thousands of initials remarkable for the vigor of their designs or the ingenuity of their backgrounds or interlacings. One series is about five inches square. One cannot refrain from expressing the regret that so many modern designers and publishers seem to be entirely ignorant of the beauty of some of the Plantin initials, and prefer elaborated distortions of the alphabet, which are every way unworthy of comparison. But Plantin soon found that there was a limit to the effects to be had from engravings on wood when printed on his rough paper and by his weak presses. He began to develop on a grand scale illustrations on cop-

per, of which the "Humanæ Salutis Monumenta" of 1571, with its seventy-one large plates, was his earliest and most noteworthy example.

Two rooms contain the remnants of the type-foundry, which provoke reflection on the difference between old and new methods of book-making. The modern printer does not make his types; he does not even own a punch or a matrix. Buying his types from many foundries, he has great liberty of selection, but, necessarily, a selection from the designs of other men. It follows that the text types of one printer may be—must be, often—just the same as those of another printer, and that there can be no really strong individuality in the books of any house. In the sixteenth century every eminent printer had some of his types made to his own order, which types he only used. This was the method: He hired an engraver to draw and cut in steel the model letters, or punches, and to provide the accompanying mold and matrices. Keeping the punches, he took the mold and matrices to men who cast types for the trade, who furnished him all he needed. The founders who made Plantin's earlier types were Guyot and

The Type-foundry.



Van Everbrocht of Antwerp. The designs for these types and the making of the punches and matrices were by skilled engravers in different cities at prices which now seem incredibly small—from twenty to forty sous for punch and matrix of ordinary letter. Robert Granjon of Lyons and Guillaume Le Bé of Paris did much of his best work; Hautin of Rochelle, Ven der Keere of Tours, and Bomberghe of Cologne were also employed. Plantin had types cast in his office after 1563, but the foundry was not an important part of the house until 1600; at that date the collection of punches was very large.

Here are some of the common tools of typemaking,—the vises, grindstones, files, gravers, etc.,—and rude enough they seem. When we go into the next room, and scrutinize the molds and punches behind the wire screens, and the justified matrices in the show-cases, we wonder that this excellent workmanship could have been done by these rough tools. Printed specimens of some of the types are shown on the walls, but they do not fairly show the full merit of the work. It is true that the counters are not as deep as a modern founder would require, but the cutting is clean and good.

Here are the punches of the great type of the Polyglot, of the music of the "Antiphonary," besides Roman, Italic, Greek, and Hebrew,—of many sizes,—all out of use, out of style. Do we make better types now? From the mechanical point of view, yes: modern types are more truly cut and aligned, more solid in body, than those cast by hand from metal poured in the mold with a spoon. From the utilitarian, and even from the artistic standpoint, one cannot say yes so confidently. Modern types are more delicate, have more finish, and more graceful lines; but the old types are stronger and simpler, more easily read, and have features of grace that have never been excelled.

To the admirer of old furniture, the room numbered 26—the bed-chamber of the last Moretus—is attractive. A great bedstead of carved oak, black with age, partly covered with an embroidered silk coverlet (a marvel of neat handiwork and dinginess), flanked by a grimy prie-dieu and a wardrobe equally venerable, is dimly reflected in a tarnished mirror of the last century. On walls covered with stamped and gilt leather hang two old prints and a carving of the crucifixion. Elegant in its day, admirable yet, but how dead and cheerless is this little

room! As devoid of life and warmth as the crucibles and furnaces in the foundry.

There is no room in the Museum deficient in objects of interest, for in all are paintings or prints or old typographic bric-à-brac enough to evoke enthusiasm from the dullest observer; but, after all, the great charm of a printer's museum is in the printer's books, and the library is properly placed at the end of all, and is the culmination of all. It is rich in rare books. Here is the "Bible of 36 lines," which is rated by many bibliographers as the first great work of Gutenberg. Here are first editions and fine copies from the offices of all the famous early printers. They were not bought for show, nor as rarities — merely as texts to be compared, collated, or referred to for a new manuscript copy to be put in the compositors' hands. The collection here shown of the books printed by Plantin is large, probably larger than can be found elsewhere, but not entirely complete. They are not arranged in chronological order; one has to consult Ruelens's catalogue to see how Plantin's ambition rose with opportunity — to see what great advances he made every year and for many years, not only in the number of his books, but in their greater size

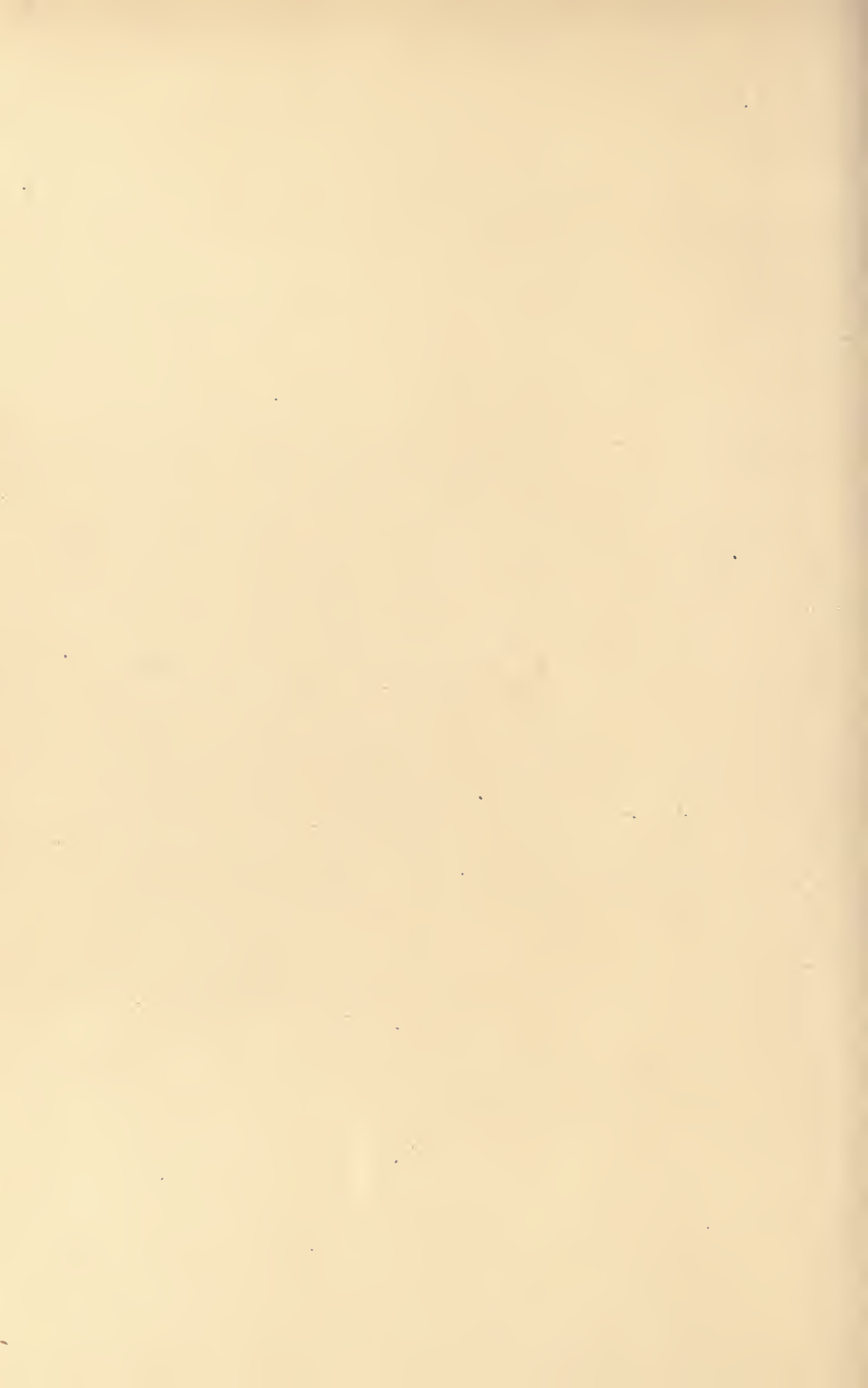
and merit, and in steadily increasing improvement of workmanship. "He is all spirit," wrote Montanus; "he gives little thought to food, or drink, or repose. He lives to work."

VI

THE most valuable part of this collection of fourteen thousand books is not in its printed but its written treasures. Plantin was a model man of business, who carefully preserved records, accounts, and much of his correspondence, and taught his successors to exercise similar diligence. The records show more than the business; they show the man and his motives. Many are in Plantin's handwriting, the accounts in Flemish, the correspondence in Latin, French, and sometimes in Spanish. The more valuable papers have been edited and published by Max Rooses, the director of the Museum.

In these records may be found his correspondence with artists, scholars, and dignitaries, both civil and ecclesiastical, as well as the

Plantin's Private Office.



weekly bills of his workmen, inventories of stock, accounts of sales, of profit and loss, memoranda of work done and work prepared—everything one can need for an insight into the economy of an old printing-house. Here is his letter to the King of Spain setting forth his grievances from the king's delayed payments; the items of money spent at the wedding-feast of each daughter (and curious reading it is); the bills of type-founders and engravers on wood; his written wrestlings with money-lenders who wanted too much of interest or of security, and with booksellers who wanted too much discount, and sold books below regular prices; his bargainings with editors and authors for manuscripts, and the *pourboires* he had to pay to officials of high and low station for permission to print; his complaints against the intolerable delays of artists and engravers.* Rich as it is in relics of the domestic life of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the house and furniture of the Museum does not show

* There are engravers on copper here who offer to work for eight florins a day in their own houses. When they have worked one or two days they go to taverns and disreputable houses, and carouse with worthless people. There they pawn their goods and tools. Whoever has work in their hands is obliged to hunt them up and pay their debts. [Plantin to Ferdinand Ximenes, Jan. 2, 1587.]

that domestic life with the clearness that the business life can be seen in the records. What is missing?

It is not an easy matter to make a wise selection from the wealth of the material which M. Rooses, the director of the Museum, has brought to light. One must begin with the unexpected discoveries. Contrary to the prevailing belief, Plantin's editions were not small. His ordinary edition was 1250 copies; his largest edition was 3900 copies of the Pentateuch in Hebrew. He refused to print books in small editions unless he was paid the cost of the work before it was begun. He sold few single copies; the retail trade in ordinary books was done by wife and daughters in shops in other quarters of the city. Nearly all his books went to booksellers at fairs or in other cities, to whom he gave the small discount of about one-sixth of the retail price. The retail prices were very small. The ordinary text-book, in an octavo (in size of leaf equivalent to the modern 16mo) of three hundred and twenty pages, was then sold at retail for ten sous. A Horace of eleven sheets sold for one sou; a Virgil of nineteen and a half sheets for three

sous — of thirty-eight sheets for five sous; the Bible, 1567, in Latin, at one florin. For large quartos and folios, for texts in Greek, and for profusely illustrated books, the prices were as high as, or even higher than, they are now, considering the then greater purchasing power of money. For his Polyglot in eight volumes he asked seventy florins, equivalent to one hundred and twelve dollars of American money.

The modern publisher is amazed at the low prices for ordinary books, but the records show that the cost of a book was in proportion. Plantin paid very little to authors and editors. Sometimes they were required to contribute to the cost of the printing, and were given a few copies of the book after it had been printed as a full make-weight. As a rule they contributed nothing, and were paid, if paid at all, in their own books. Many authors got but ten florins for the copy of valuable and salable books. The literary world was undergoing a curious transition. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries scholars had tried to keep to themselves their knowledge; in the sixteenth century they were eager to publish it, and glad to get an oppor-

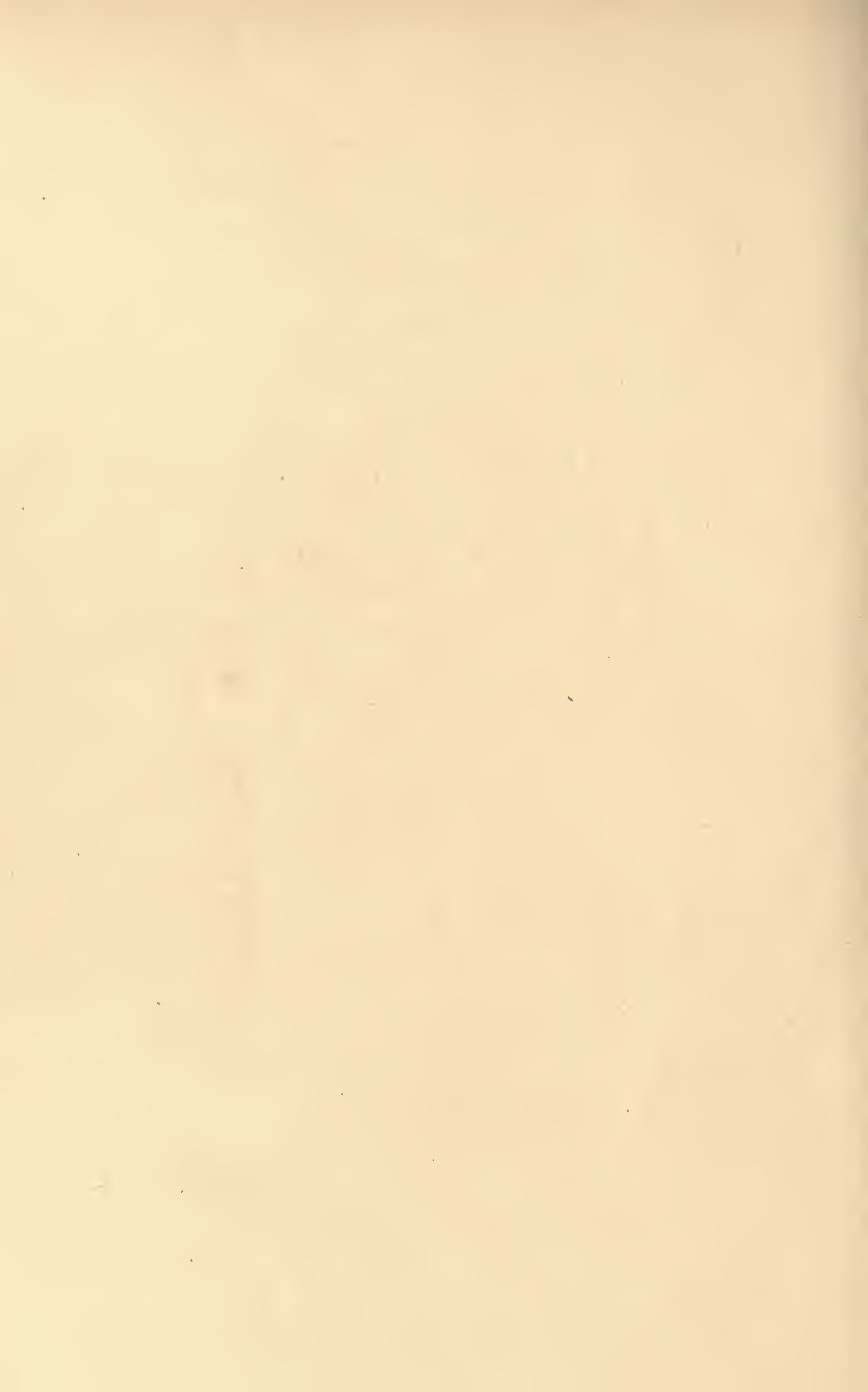
tunity.* Many seemed to think that they were under moral obligation to give freely what they knew.

Designing and engraving were relatively cheaper than they are now. From four to seven sous was the price for designing and engraving a beautiful initial letter, not to be had as good now for as many dollars. What modern publisher would hesitate to engage Van den Broeck to furnish the elaborate and beautiful design, *Our Lady of Seven Sorrows*, a full folio page, at the price of six florins? For his superb engraving of this design Plantin overpaid the dissolute Jerome Wiericx ninety-six florins. The usual price of the brothers Wiericx for engraving a plate of folio size was thirty florins.

All the materials of the book were cheap. The ordinary paper came from France and cost, according to weight and quality, from twenty-four to seventy-eight sous a ream. Even the large vellum skins of Holland, bought for the

* Balzac wrote a letter to Elzevir, in which he thanked Elzevir effusively for his piratical reprint of one of his books. Balzac never got a sou from this reprint, not even thanks, but he was not the less grateful. He said he was delighted because he had been introduced in the good society of the great authors, that had received the imprimatur and approval of Elzevir.

A Room in Plantin's House.



"Royal Polyglot," cost but forty-five sous the dozen.

He paid his binders for the labor of binding (not including the leather or boards) an octavo in full sheep one sou for each copy; for a quarto, one sou and a half to two sous; for a folio, in full calf, from seven to eleven sous.* Richly gilt books were paid for at higher prices, but miserably small they seem as compared with present prices.

VII

If Plantin had done no more than to found a large printing-house, he would deserve no more consideration than any other successful trader of his time. He was not an ordinary trader; he has right to an honorable place among the great educators of his century — not for what he wrote, but for what he had written

* M. Rooses appraises the real or purchasing value of silver in the time of Plantin, at its maximum, at four times its stamped or nominal value. By this standard the sou should be rated as equal to eight cents of American money, and the florin of twenty sous as equal to $1.60.

or created for him. As a scholar or as an editor he has no standing, but as a publisher he outranks all his contemporaries. He printed more than sixteen hundred editions, some of which were original work written at his request. His greatest production was eighty-three editions in 1575, and the lowest, twenty-four editions in 1576, the year of the Spanish Fury.

One of the difficulties of a publisher of the sixteenth century was the scarcity of books that could be printed to profit. To this could be added the poverty and the sparseness of readers. All the popular classic texts, and all ordinary forms of school books and of devotional books, had been printed so many times, and in such large editions, that they often had to be sold for little more than the cost of the white paper. Yet Plantin entered this overcrowded field with confidence. His books of devotion were more carefully printed and more richly illustrated; his school texts were more carefully edited and more intelligently arranged. All were of the first order; he did not pander to low appetites; his aims were always high and his taste was severe.

Plantin's first attempt at a great book, the Flemish Dictionary, was begun by him soon

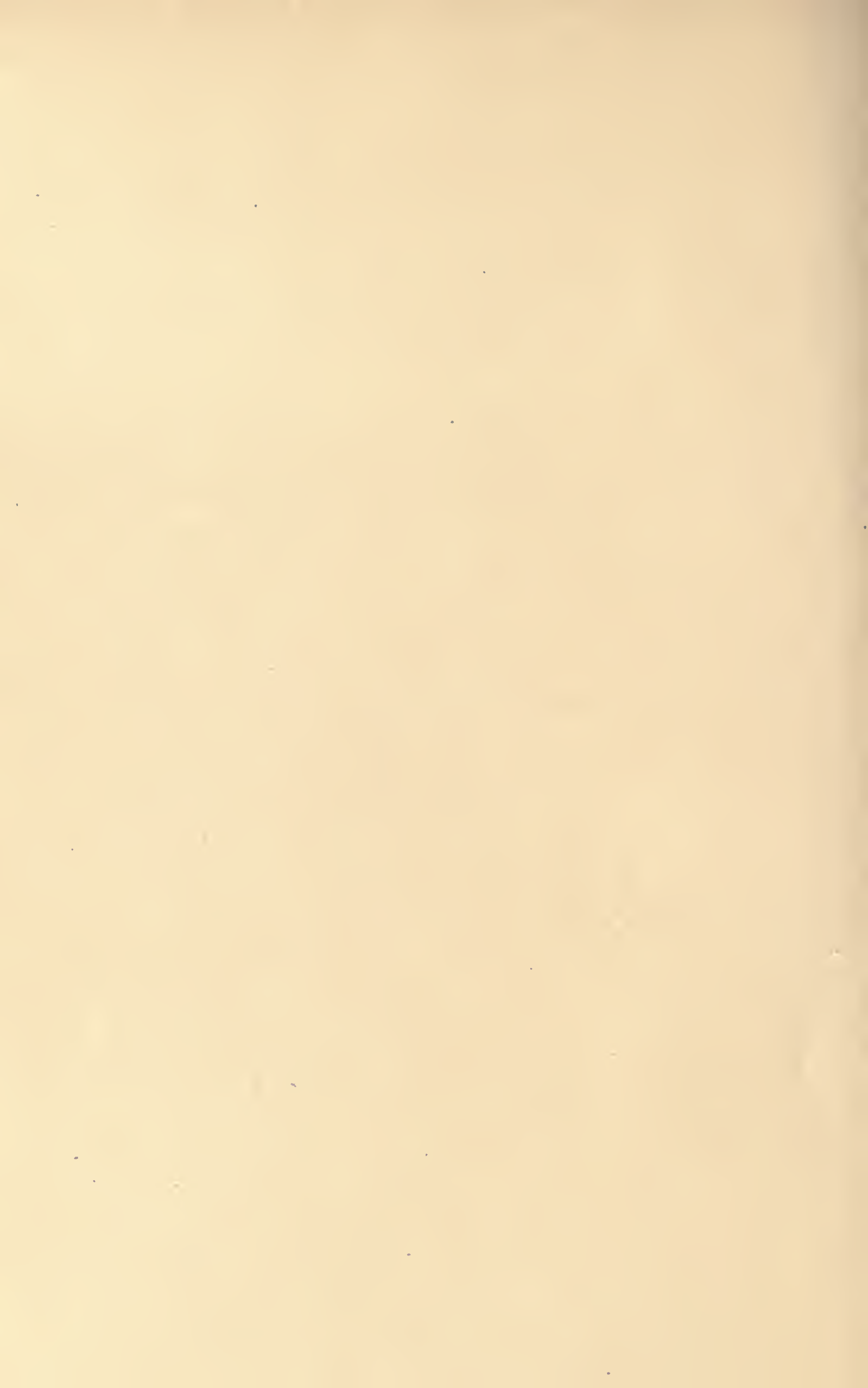
after his arrival in Antwerp. After many delays and difficulties the book was published; but the literary merit of the work was largely due to the editors he engaged to perfect his unfinished plans. This experience was of value. It taught him that he was better fitted to plan than to write or compile books, and he never forgot the lesson. Ever after he confined himself entirely to direction. Here he was supreme. Montanus said that no printer of his time had the courage to plan so great a book, or the skill to bring it to such a successful conclusion. No one knew so well how to infuse every helper on the work with his own enthusiasm: he made the pressmen and compositors as zealous as the editors. His amicable relations with authors, editors, artists, and engravers show that he did not control by trick or tact. He must have been just and kind, for he retained their friendship to the last.

The printers of that period could find but little else than classical or theological works to print, and most of them continuously published their ventures in the small size of octavo and duodecimo. Plantin's choice was for great folios in which he could show large types, and print on wood or copper to fine advantage. He went at the work boldly. Undismayed by his losses

in the Polyglot and by the Spanish Fury, he engaged professors at the University of Louvain to revise and collect texts and prepare copy for new editions of the fathers of the church, beginning with St. Augustine in ten volumes, at a cost of thirteen thousand florins. This was followed by St. Jerome in nine volumes. Then came Tertullian; then a great Latin Bible, and a great French Bible,— all books of remarkable beauty. While these were in press he was also at work on fully illustrated books of botany by Dodoens and De Lobel and De l'Ecluse; on books of geography by Mercator, Ortelius, and Guicciardini; on books of music, philology, archæology, navigation, and mathematics. Few of these books came to him unsought. Most were written at his suggestion or his order. All of them owe their beauty of dress to his liberality as a publisher.

Doubtless Plantin would have preferred to print and publish books on science and education, but the Fleming of that period was hardly ready for them. Much as he needed instruction, it was important that he should decide the question whether he had the right to read or think at all on the new speculations in science and religion; whether, indeed, he had the right to

A Corner of the Court-yard.



himself and his property. For the King of Spain had practically denied both rights, and the question was to be decided not by books but by blows.

Before the year 1567 he had printed many editions of the Bible in Latin, Flemish, and Hebrew. By far the largest part of the reading of the sixteenth century was theological, and Plantin saw that he would make his greatest success in getting an appointment as the recognized or official printer of the liturgical books of the Roman Catholic Church. His earliest attempts were beset with difficulties. He had to solicit the help of Cardinal Granvelle and Philip II. The permit given by the pope and his cardinals was grudgingly allowed by the ecclesiastical magnates of the Netherlands. When he did begin to print, he had to pay ten per cent. of his receipts to Paul Manutius of Rome, who held the privilege. He had to petition the King of Spain to get the exclusive privilege he desired for the printing of the Church on Spanish territory. His friend Montanus told the king that Plantin's prices were more, but his printing was better than that of the Italian printers. It was this superiority in workmanship, as well as in business methods, that turned the scale in his favor.

Two of these service books, the great Psalter and the Antiphonary of 1571 and 1572, are admirable pieces of rubricated printing. For many years the printing of these and other books kept him in financial embarrassment, but the result demonstrated the wisdom of his foresight. He never lived to enjoy the fruits, but his successors were made rich by a monopoly which they held for more than two hundred years.

Plantin's printing was good, but it has been overpraised. He was named "King of Printers" at a time when the duties most admired in a printer were those of editor and publisher. Here he was grand. His purposes were always far beyond those of his rivals; great folios, many volumes, large types, difficult works in little-known languages, "lumping patents" or privileges, profuse illustrations by eminent artists — every peculiarity of typography that dazzled or astonished. All his books are above mediocrity, but he did not attain the highest rank, either in his arrangement of types or in his press-work. He had obscure rivals in France and the Netherlands, who never made showy or imposing books, but who did better technical work, furnished more faultless texts,

and showed clearer and sharper impressions from types. After Balthazar III. a decline set in. Some of the later books of the house are positively shabby — a disgrace to their patent and to the art.

VIII

WAS Plantin a Catholic? Prefaces written by him in some books are fervid with protestations of loyalty to the old Church. Montanus and Cardinal Granvelle, and many prominent ecclesiastics, were his personal friends, and vouched for his orthodoxy. The suspicious King of Spain seems to have never doubted him, not even when he went to Louvain, that home of heresy. These are strong assurances; yet he was often denounced as a Calvinist; he printed books that were proscribed, and for which he lost his property. His correspondence with heretics, but recently discovered, proves beyond cavil that he was at heart a member of a non-resisting sect not unlike that of the Friends,— a sect which taught that religion was a personal

matter of the heart and life, and not at all dependent on churches, creeds, or confessions. How much this flexible, non-resistant faith was his justification for the insincerity of his professions he alone can answer. It is certain that he was insincere. He was not the stuff martyrs are made of.

It is more pleasant to turn to another side of his character, in which his sincerity is above all reproach. To the last, Plantin was true to his trade. Too many successful traders make use of their success to indulge in unsuspected propensities. They kick away the ladder they climbed up on; they forswear trade and plebeian occupations; they take their ease and display their wealth; they build mansions and buy estates; they seek social distinction for themselves and their families. From this vainglory Plantin was entirely free. His ambition began and ended in his printing-house. To form a great office worthy of the king of printers, in which the largest and best books should be printed in a royal manner, was the great purpose of his life. Neither the Spanish Fury, nor the siege of Antwerp, nor the destruction of the great city's privileges and commerce, nor the king's neglect, nor his failure to perpetuate his

Statuette of Madonna and Child, over Candlestick in the Press-room.
(From an Etching made for this Article by Otto H. Bacher.)

name in a son, nor the infirmities of old age, shook his purpose. The future fate of the office for which he had labored was doubtful; for his sons-in-law were not in accord with one another. He had little ready money and many obligations. He had only the appearance of success; his greatest bequest was the means by which an unreached success could be attained. The probabilities were that his name, fame, and estate would soon disappear in a struggle between contentious heirs; but with all the odds against him, he did carry his point. The will of the dying old man had more enduring force in it than there was in any decree or treaty then made for the perpetuation of the Spanish dynasty. The Plantin-Moretus house outlived the Spanish house of Hapsburg. For more than three centuries the printing-office was kept in the family in unbroken line of descent; for at least three generations it maintained its position as the first office in the world. The Plantin types and presses and office are still the pride of Antwerp, but the statue of the king's representative, the fierce Duke of Alva, which once dominated a square in the city, and who boasted on the pedestal that he had restored order and preserved religion and reconstructed

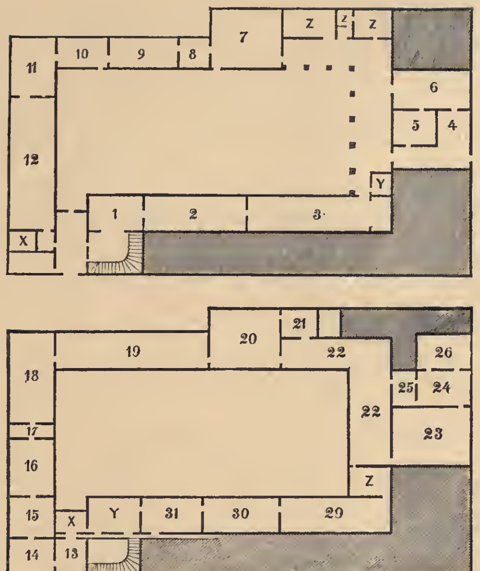
society, was long ago overthrown. No overthrow could be more complete. It was not merely the upsetting of statue or dynasty, but of the foundations of medieval ideas and principles. Plantin, unwittingly no doubt, but not the less efficiently, did his share in bringing down this thorough destruction. The books which he and others printed aroused the mental activity and inspired the freedom which soon made the Netherlands the foremost State in the world. Kings die and beliefs change; the bronze statues made to be imperishable are destroyed, but the printed word stands. The book lives, and lives forever. Horace was right: it is more enduring than bronze.

In walking through the Museum the eye does not weary of sight-seeing, but the brain does refuse to remember objects that crowd so fast. To remember, one must rest and think of what he has seen. It is a relief to sit down under the cool arcade and look out on the quiet court, and think of the men who trod these stones. For here Plantin and Moretus used to sit in the cool of the day; here they matured plans for great books, and devised means of borrowing money to pay fast-coming obligations. Was the end worth

the worry? Behind those latticed windows, obscured with rampant grape-vine leaves, the great Justus Lipsius wrote or corrected the books that were the admiration of all the universities—books now almost forgotten. In the next room Poelman and Kilianus and Raphelengius plodded like wheel-horses in dragging obscure texts out of the muddy roads in which copyists and compositors had left them. Who thinks of them now? Through that doorway have often passed the courtly Van Dyke and the dashing Rubens, gay in velvets and glittering with jewels. They, at least, are of the immortals. Dignitaries of all classes have been here: patriarchal Jewish rabbis and steeple-crowned Puritans; the ferocious Duke of Alva and the wily Cardinal Granvelle; cowled ecclesiastics from Rome and black-gowned professors from Leyden. From upper windows not far away Plantin's daughters have looked out in terror, on the awful night of the Spanish Fury, as they heard the yells of the savage soldiers raging about the court, and listened to their threats of "blood and flesh and fire," and shuddered at the awful fate that seemed before them. Truly a sad time for the making of books or the cultivation of letters.

And even nine years after this, the boy Balthazar must have been stopped at study by the roar of Farnese's guns during that memorable siege, and by the shrieks of the starving defenders of the doomed city.

The evening bell sounds its warning: it is time to go. At our request the obliging concierge gives us a few leaves from the grapevine, and we take our places in the outgoing procession. Out once more in the steaming streets—out in the confused roar and clatter of modern city life. But the memory of the Museum is like that of the chimes of Antwerp's great cathedral—never to be forgotten.



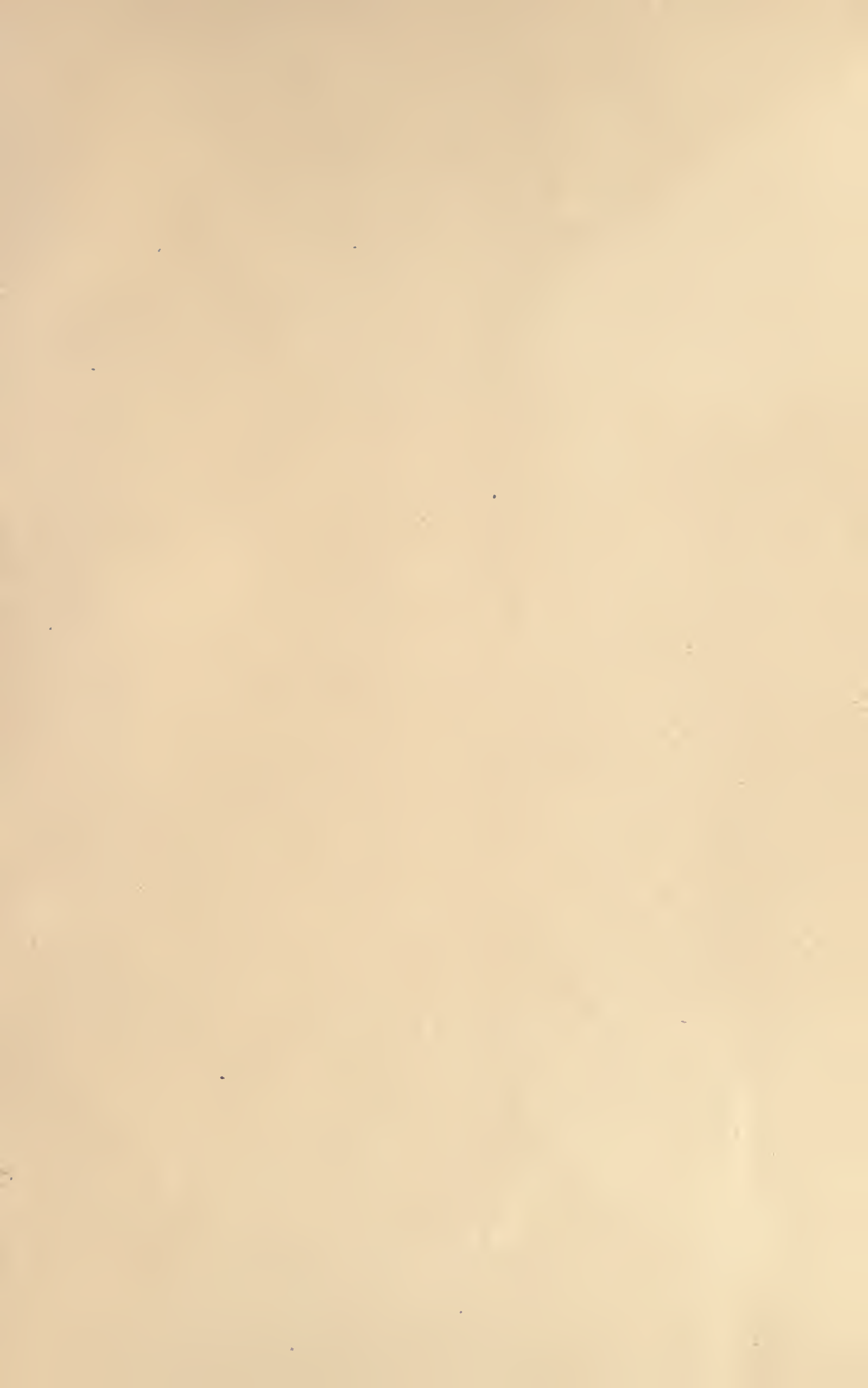
Plan of the Plantin-Moretus Museum.

The Ground Floor:

1, 2, 3, Parlors.
4, 5, Shops.
6, Room of Tapestries.
7, Room of the correctors.
8, Office.
9, Room of Justus Lipsius.
10, Lobby.
11, Room for the letters.
12, Printing-room.
X, Porter's lodge.
Y, Staircase looking out on the court.
Z, Servants' room, etc.

First Story:

13, 14, Front rooms.
15, 29, 30, Library.
16, 18, 22, Wood-engravings.
17, Lobby.
19, Copper-plates.
20, 24, Parlors.
21, Room of the licenses.
23, Room of the Antwerp engravers.
25, Rear room.
26, Sleeping-room.
31, Hall of archives.
X, Reading-room.
Y, Office of the Director.
Z, Staircase leading to the court.



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